

Patients fail to show up for 1,000 GP appointments a month in Portsmouth

Patients at Portsmouth's 25 GP practices are failing to turn up for 1,000 pre-booked GP appointments a month, a new survey has showed.

A similar number of nursing team appointments are also lost by patients who do not attend (DNA).

The figures include patients who fail to show up after booking a same-day 'urgent' appointment.

The figures were revealed by two city practice managers in a presentation to the city-wide Patients Participation Forum organised by NHS Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group.

Paul Cox, the business manager at Sunnyside Medical Centre, Fratton Way, and Jan Matthews, practice manager at Salisbury Road, Southsea, surveyed their colleagues last month.

Mr Cox said: "The high number of patients who DNA is staggering and a tremendous waste of resources for the local NHS.

"People often forget to cancel appointments or cancel so late that any re-allocation of that appointment is unlikely as most 'on-the-day' appointments have been snapped up early in the morning.

"We would please urge patients to give us sufficient notice when cancelling an appointment. Don't leave it to the last moment.

"People should really think hard before booking that 'urgent' appointment when they don't really need it, as they could be depriving someone who is in genuine need of it. And please do ensure that you arrive on time for all your appointments."

City practices are still managing to offer their patients 28,000 pre-booked appointments a month, with national statistics showing that the average time a GP spends with their patient is nearly 12 minutes.

On top of that, patients receive 5,400 hours a month of nursing team appointments, 1,600 hours support from healthcare workers and 700 hours for in-surgery phlebotomy (blood tests).

The survey of 25 CCG member practices conducted in December 2013 showed that:

- every surgery which responded offers same-day appointments
- 90% offer same-day access for emergencies
- 60% provide online appointments
- 40% send text appointment reminders
- 90% allow you to book appointments more than three weeks in advance
- 75% allow you to book nurse appointments more than three weeks in advance.

The 25 practices have more than 215,000 registered patients – with the numbers ranging from 4,000 to 30,000, depending on the size of the practice.

There are around 140 GPs in Portsmouth, although many work part-time; and 80 to 100 nurses in surgery employment (65 whole-time equivalents).

Separate story

GP receptionists – Please treat them with respect

Patients were today urged to treat their GP receptionists with respect.

Paul Cox, business manager for Sunnyside Medical Centre in Southsea, said: “The receptionists at all Portsmouth’s 25 practices are usually the first and last contact point for a patient with his/her practice.

“They do a challenging and sometimes high-pressured job doing such things as directing patients to the right appointments and providing prescriptions.

“They need to ask patients difficult questions to help ensure they get the right service and appointment.

“But they are often criticised and misunderstood. It is not their fault if they can’t offer a patient a same-day appointment, or an appointment with a named GP. They don’t have a magic wand!

“Most people are as good as gold with receptionists – but a small minority of people take out their frustrations on them.

“We all have a zero tolerance of verbal or physical abuse against any of our staff.

“We just ask all patients to show receptionists the respect and understanding that they deserve.”